

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: JOSEPH KEKAUOHA JR., musician

"Little Joe" Kekauoha, Hawaiian, was born in Kakaako, December 15, 1920. He had two sisters and four brothers. His family made several moves, living part of the time with various relatives in and out of Kakaako.

He attended schools in Waikiki, Kakaako, and McCully. He began his professional music career by playing the ukulele at the age of eight. He also held other jobs while playing music, including a stint as a caddy for Waialae Golf Course and employment for 10 years with Hawaiian Pine.

In 1948, he made a decision to stick with his music, foregoing other employment. Little Joe never married. He presently lives in Waimanalo and plays music with Jesse Kalima.

TIME LINE

1920	birth: Kakaako
1928	began to play music professionally
1937	started working for Hawaiian Pine
1948	made decision to stick with music
1950	moved to Waimanalo homestead

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Joseph M. Kekauoha Jr. (JK)

January 23, 1978

Waimanalo, Oahu, Hawaii

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

GG: This is an interview with Joe Kekauoha in his home in Waimanalo and the date is January 23rd. The interviewer is Gael Gouveia. I wondered if maybe first of all if you could tell me again how you came to be living in Kakaako?

JK: Well, my grandfolks, my grandfather and grandmother, they moved from Laie to Kakaako. And before that, well, my grandfather came from Kauai. Koloa. And he moved with his family down Laie. He worked for Kahuku Plantation company for what year, I don't know. He pack his family and move to Kakaako to make a better living. He was a boiler-maker. He got into Honolulu Ironworks and which before that---if it was Honolulu Ironworks, I don't know. So, my father had two brothers beside him, make three. And five sisters. But before I grew older, the oldest sister, his sister died. Maybe I was about one or two. I was born December 15, 1920. So, what year my mother and dad got married? I don't know, but my mother come from Laupahoehoe, the Big Island of Hawaii.

GG: How did she happen to come to Kakaako, do you know?

JK: Well, she happen to have on her side, her family, she called it tutu-man and tutu-lady. Took care of her, hanai, just like adopted. And I think she left the Big Island, nine or ten years old, I think. Then, she went to Sacred Hearts School, Royal School. And in her young days, she start working at American Sanitary Laundry, up at the Queen Street and Coral.

GG: Yeah, Magoon's place, right?

JK: Magoon place. The Magoon brothers. And...

GG: She met your father?

JK: I think so. And then, well, she said before she met my father she met somebody else, she was married. She didn't stay long enough because he drank too much. Beat her up. So she divorce him, Hawaii. So, she divorce him, and when she married my dad, I don't know but, then came my dad. Then came me. Where Mother Waldron Park is now, at the

time when I grew up, maybe about five or six years before, that place was the City and County yard.

GG: For their vehicles?

JK: Yeah. Everything, was for everything. And then down at Cooke and Auahi Street, that used to be the Tuna Packer. Down there. That's where they get...the fishermens used to bring in the aku fish. That's where they used to pack 'em. And we used to have all that odor. And then the burning for the rubbish goes [on] down at the Squattersville, down at the beach. Next to Kewalo Basin. And never was Kewalo Basin. That was Squattersville at one time, before they changed it to Kewalo Basin. That's where they used to burn the rubbish. Sometime, they burn everything, then they can see. That's dead anyway. So that used to be our fume, being there half of your life, if you don't smell that it seems like something is wrong.

GG: Something's missing.

JK: Yeah, something missing, you see. And it can't be. See. So, from there on, we moved Halekauwila and Keawe Street. And those days used to have apartments. Upstairs, downstairs house. How they build houses, maybe one family upstairs, one family downstairs. Then they used to cement. This was just like, you make your own, you know. If somebody want to sleep downstairs, they find some boards and fix up a place--a small portion where they could put their bed or whatever--and sleep downstairs, eat upstairs. And do everything upstairs. In other words, you always have place to sleep. Even if you don't like to sleep upstairs where it's crowded, you can always come downstairs and sleep but you have to make your own ways of be comfortable.

So, my mother said that my grandmother's folks (father's parents) lived with her. But, I was too small to know about it. And they the one used to take care my father. 'Cause my father was going--he went as far as six grade at the old Saint Louis School on River. On River Street, those days. But never go school.

(GG laughs)

JK: Everytime a boat would come in from the Mainland, he used to go out and swim for nickels and dimes. (He hung around with the divers). And when he get through, he goin' gamble. (At Kumalae or Magoon Blocks).

(GG laughs)

JK: So, the brothers one day, came down the house. Talk to my grandfather.

He said, "Mr. Kekauoha?"

"Yes."

"Is your son Joseph home?"

"Yeah, he's at school."

Said, "No. But we want to tell you that he hasn't been at school often."

"Why? How come?"

"Well, we don't know. That's why we want to let you know."

So, my dad didn't know that the father (priest from Saint Louis) came over. He was down the pier someplace, shooting, you know. Gambling. So when he came home, my grandfather looked at him and then he got mad. Put him down the...those days, the boys bad school used to be down at Kahuku. And he put 'em down there just because of that. He wasn't bad, my dad. But he didn't care. And I think he was just about 11 or 12 years old, I think, because when he became 14 years old my grandfather made him go work with him at the boilermaker shop, Honolulu Ironworks. And he worked there till he grew old. Got married (1921) and everything.

GG: How long was he down at Kahuku?

JK: That part I don't know. So then he came home. Then after, he got married to my mother and got me. And we in Kakaako. We might move away. We might stay with my grandfather maybe a year or so, but he knows his father and mother so well that he don't want to stay with folks, with his parents. So we move out. But (I was) young--okay, nine months, ten months (old), I wouldn't know--but, we moved here and there in Kakaako until I became about six, seven years old. We move up to Hotel Street and Alapai, where the buses are--HRT bus... Yard was. And there was a corner Chinese store, right on the corner, before they knock it off in the back of us where we stayed. But every weekend, Friday after school--I still was going Pohukaina--but, when pau school, we stay with my grandfolks until Sunday, my dad take us home. Because my dad was always going someplace to gamble on weekends. He do that because, just to have extra money in his pocket.

But most time, when he goes to places like that he tells my mother where he's at. So if we need anything, my mother sends me and I go look for him. Because I know where he is. And lot of times I don't see him. I just send somebody--you know, they used to put a, they still put a watchman on whatever. I tell 'em... "Tell my daddy." So he goes up, so whatever. He comes down and he give it to me. I run home. So that was the transaction between my dad and me, see, so, in order not to get him away from the game and just because I want some money. (The man, watchman take care of it. I don't interrupt him because) they say it's bad luck when they come down and do things like that.

So had Magoon Block and Kumalae Block (where dad gambled). Magoon Block was, if you facing this way, it's on the left. If you going towards Waikiki. And Kumalae on the right. But if you coming to town, it's on the right side. So Kumalae Block was one laundry store. One laundry and the poi factory in the back. And Magoon Block had all stores---barber shop, and small snack and everything. And at the corner of South and Queen used to be Murata Furniture Store. Stayed there, and upstairs were people, you know, Hawaiians that were living up there. Some of them are not around any more. Some of them up there, but, most of them born and raised up there. And just like Danny Kaleikini. His father and uncles and aunties were born there. And few others. And then, across, if you see where the new fire station is at, Kakaako fire station, across the street used to be Kawaiahao Court. That's another section of people besides the graveyard and the poi factory there. Another poi factory. And along side where that big McKesson something, along side there was another poi factory. We had about 1, 2, 3 poi factories in Kakaako. Because all Hawaiians--they got to have their poi or whatever.

GG: Right. Like the Japanese have to have their rice.

JK: Yeah, have their rice.

GG: Did other groups eat the poi, too, though? Like the Portuguese?

JK: Well those days, well, those days I don't know. See? When you young you don't know. But today everybody eats that. Ever since World War II, because it's a building food. Especially they make poi out of, they call it, whatever they do they call poi cocktail. And they feed that to children and to people in the hospital. To bring up their energy. You know, their health back again, see.

GG: Did you ever live at Squattersville?

JK: No, no. Was right in there. I think was Halekauwila and Coral was the first with my grandfolks. Then, we move up to Alapai and Hotel. And if they did, if we did move in Kawaiahao Street, I don't know what mama told you. Maybe that the first. Then we move again, away from Halekauwila and Keawe. From there we, I went to Kawaiahao Street where the Catholic church is. I know where is it but the street I don't know. I forgot. Then we moved back to Kakaako, to Auahi and Keawe. We stayed there until my auntie got married. And most of the places in Kakaako is all Bishop Estate, beside whatever other people, but the people on Queen Street was all Portuguese who own their place. Wasn't owned by Bishop. So that's on Ilaniwai Street, the next street in. A lot of Portuguese own their own place. And the rest was all Bishop Estate place.

GG: Now where you lived, the various places, did you rent or lease...

JK: Yeah, was Bishop Estate. So, we got ten years at a time. So, then,

whatever. Plus the garbage. No, they (the Territory) took care of the garbage. I'm sorry. And we took care the light and the water. But wasn't much because you only pay twice a year. So much. So every six months you pay. That was good for ten years so they re-enleased again another ten years.

GG: They only collected the rent twice a year?

JK: Yeah.

GG: How come not every month?

JK: No, no, that was the way they did it. And then their office was on Merchant and Kaahumanu at the time. Right on the corner where the parking lot is now. That big city parking lot right across the old police station. That used to be that whole area there. That used to be the Bishop Estate office.

GG: Did somebody come to collect the rent?

JK: No, we go down.

GG: Or you took it to the office.

JK: We took it down.

GG: And what happened if you couldn't pay?

JK: Well, that was my department. I had to take care that. And I was always playing music. Never not doing nothing. But, if I can't meet it, well, my dad helped me. But I was supposed to--be make sure that I got that paid. See, that my--that was the thing that I was told to pay, see. But, on most of the time, I was paying. (From about the time I was 17, 18 years old).

GG: Yeah. Now, you started, you said, playing music at the age of eight. How did you learn?

JK: My mama taught me. Taught me how to play the ukulele. The basic part, and teach me the Hawaiian song. But as I went out with different group and played with your father-in-law (Manuel Gouveia), which from there, from the time we move away from Lusitana and Miller, where Lou's Drugstore is, where you go up to Vineyard now. Before you make that intersection to go to the old way of what you call, Dole Park, that used to be Lou's Drugstore. We used to be in the back of it. Across the street but up the hill. So, and from there we moved with my auntie--was still with my auntie--to Circle Lane. It's right in the back of the water supply. That road go down to the old Honolulu Medical Building. Then she bought a place with my uncle out at Kapahulu, Hunter and Winam. We move up there and then like anything kids fight.

Everytime we go with family, we fight. But I was still playing music, you know. So lot of times, I was the very one that no matter what they have, I be eating, I won't eat with the kids. I will be eating with the big people because sometime, those days, when I come home all I want is 25 cents. Candy, for the show. And that money that I make I give it to my dad.

So if my folks knew the value of those days, that to put away, I think I--I don't know but--that's beside the point, eh. I think we wouldn't be happy for what we are today (if we hadn't gone through those times). If my dad thought about bank, he never think so hard about it if we did have bank those days, see. Because every little thing we had, we used to share. So my brothers and sisters used to eat what the big people have left over. And they (relatives) used to watch us, see. But you know, one of those things that, my dad don't like that but, he can't help it, we staying with family. Until the last time we fought, (and then) that was it. I told my mother and dad, "Let's go back Kakaako." Stay with family. That's no good. So we moved back Kakaako. That was the whole thing and till today we don't stay with family. Now that we all grown up, all my brothers and sisters are married. They all on their own. After getting out, then we moved back to Keawe. That's Keawe and Auahi Street.

Mama was carrying, her last baby was a girl. And was about seven months, I think, when she saw (the traffic accident). And those days every afternoon, two times a day, the fish car used to come. Vegetable cars used to come and peddle. So she just happened to see this accident where the truck run over, vegetable truck run over the baby (a neighbor's child). So baby live six months. Was a girl. Only seven months. We moved to Mother Waldron Park, Coral and Halekauwila. And we stayed there till the (Second World) War break out. My dad went to Pearl Harbor in September 1941, before the war. After leaving Honolulu Ironworks, he went to Pearl Harbor then the war break.

So from Kakaako, I was working. I started working Hawaiian Pine 1938, playing music night time. I got out of school around either 1932 or 1933--but, in order to get out, you have to need your parents' okay. I told my dad.

I said, "I'm not doing anything. Plus I go to school daytime, night time I play music. I'm not studying." I had four brothers, two sisters in the back (younger brothers and sisters). "Why don't you spend the money on them?"

Because being eight years old from there on I made money. So half of that money went to that man (father). And 1931, then I start singing for Kamuii Coffee. There was a cafe called Kamuii. After I came back Kakaako, then I left your father-in-law. Came back Kakaako. But I started with them first. Just for try things in those days.

GG: Where did you go now? To sing?

JK: Drive-ins. You know, where you park your car and go have something to eat. Hamburger like that. One place was George's Inn at where Star of the Sea (School) is now. That's where the bus used to turn. But, those days, you have, was nothing. And have a drive-in plus one service station. That's where we used to go, put the bucket (for money) in the middle (of the group as they played).

GG: Play music right there?

JK: Right there.

GG: And then, how did you get paid for that?

JK: Whatever got in the can. We split it but you know, was a fun thing. And I was just about ten or nine or so. Then somebody like us, put us on the radio, KGU. Or when I sang with Kamuii Cafe it was 1931. Fourth of July.

GG: What was the last name? The fellow that you sang with before?

JK: Your father-in-law, Gouveia. Another boy we call "Lalo." A Puerto Rican boy which his cousin was Adolf Samuel, the fighter. Two other boys--I can't remember who--but your father-in-law and this boy, Lalo, I play with them (none of them from Kakaako). And they used to take me all around.

But everytime they'd take me, my dad used to say, "You watch my son."

So everytime when he comes home, when they bring me home, my dad is always by the door. And he third-degree me.

You know, he look me up, smell me everything, "Oh, okay."

GG: And you folks played every night?

JK: No, every weekend. See, but at night when you young, you don't get. In the day, I used to go caddy Waialae golf course. Just get a kick because, you know, when you 14, 15 years old, you still young. You not in that bracket to go to work. And when we move away from Kapahulu, go back to Kakaako. Then start playing with different groups, you go with a clear conscience that--I don't believe it but those days, Hawaiians were jealous for one another. I never think about it, but I got myself hit which for one year I couldn't talk, I couldn't sing, I couldn't open my mouth.

GG: How did that happen?

JK: Well, when you one Hawaiian, you get that and then you believe that Hawaiian hate you. Your own kind of people hate you because my voice was high--was like a woman voice. That was the whole bag of the whole thing when I start singing with Ray Kinney and Kamuii Coffee. So and

then I start playing with different groups when I'm not with Ray Kinney. Even we open the Royal Hawaiian Hotel when they opened up. Would be two days later I played in there after they had that open.

GG: That was 1927, I think?

JK: Yeah. I went in with Ray Kinney.

GG: How old were you then?

JK: Eleven. 11 years old. So, when you go in there, so naturally those days, when you that young, you don't care. But, you only do what you think you are told to do. See. They used to think that I was a older fellow. But, no, I was young. I had never, even I start playing in the bars, which you got to be 21 to play in the bar. But they look at me, they think I'm over 21. But, I never argue with them. When I get through singing I used to go outside and sit down in the car. And then, when time to go, after intermission I go back in and play. But I used to do that until I made 21. I take care. My first place of playing in the bar was Ted Lewis Inn. Used to be right on the Kalakaua and Kapiolani. And he used to have just the hotdog stand. And he used to sell just wine and hotdogs. And we used to make \$1.25 an hour. A night, I mean, \$1.25 a night.

GG: When was this? Do you remember?

JK: Oh, 1936, 1937, early part.

GG: Each musician made like \$1.25 a night?

JK: Yeah, yeah. But, the tip was big, you know. A night, a night, you know. And we played maybe five, six night but the tip was big. So, in those days Uncle Sam (U.S. government) never grab you on tips. Wasn't too much keen about it. Until after the (Second World) War, they start clamping on the tips.

GG: And how did you get the tips?

JK: People. They just put in---well, we got a can or bowl, beer bottle, cup, you know. How they put the beer. Start filling up like that.

GG: When they make requests and things?

JK: Yeah, or whatever.

GG: What kind of songs did you sing?

JK: Oh, a lot of up Hawaiian songs and hapa-haole numbers, songs, and some Mainland songs. But those days was, as long as you play good Hawaiian music to dance, I think, they enjoy. The main thing. All they wanted is something to be relax while they drink, you know.

GG: And what kind of nationality was in the crowds?

JK: All mix. So that's why today, too big on generation today. But, from there I went to work to Pacific Grill, which is, you know on Kapiolani and Ward there's a place across the bowling alley that used to be Olympic Grill, too. That was another place. I work there. And that place was dollar half. Dollar half a night. But the tip was good. Those days tips, money, \$2 to them or \$1 or whatever was just like putting \$1 in the kitty. If their payday, they throw their whole paycheck in there if they want to, you know. Because, you know, you could go out with \$1, and still come home with the loose change in those days.

GG: Was there any place in Kakaako itself that you played music?

JK: There was one. Was close to Kakaako. That was in the area Kakaako. Kewalo Inn. Felix Fountain got a magazine on the waterfront, next to Kakaako Street in Ala Moana. The drydock used to be which is now is that whole area is called Pier 1. That's where the Matson was. Across, where the new post office is (on King Street), right on the corner used to be magazine. And where that Gold (Gold Bond) building across the corner of Keawe and Ala Moana, that used to be Ramona Cafe.

GG: I see. Now did you play in one for awhile?

JK: Yeah, would be one year, or two or so. Whatever. Maybe they hire us, we go. Like that. Then, when the war came, got to join them (the military service). You know, I took physical. I didn't pass. I pass everything except... So, got into a group, five boys, one hula girl. We joined the USO (United Service Organization). I stayed in till 1944. And those days, why, that's when I knew about tax. Put money. They only paid us \$10 an hour. But the USO was maybe one night we played three shows. Three different places. But only one hour. So you figure that's \$30, yeah. Next night, would be \$40. Next night again. So was good money. But end of the year, I never file, I got caught. Got caught. So, that year, that first year I had to pay about almost close to \$400 to \$500 tax down there.

GG: Oh boy. (Laughs)

JK: So I had to. But those days, we only used to get a Federal but not the Territory. See. If we had to pay the Territory, wasn't too much. See. We used to have to keep our poll tax. You know, in order to, those days.

GG: Is that so you could vote you mean?

JK: Yeah. Or get your license. I don't know those things, see. But, I never got my driving license till 1942, because I was start working Hawaiian Pine, and then my friend was Herb Fletcher, a football coach for Saint Louis School. And he became superintendent (at Hawaiian

Pine). So he made me to make sure take care of the big trucks and your father-in-law was working for Hawaiian Pine already. So I had to get license. Sometime he used to send me out and go out and fix flat tires. So I took my license just driving around the block. Another musician, he was a policeman, he took me around the block. No hill climbing. Nothing. He gave me the license. We only talk about music. So that's how I drove.

And then when the war break, everything then, you know, to go down the pier, you need the pass and everything. And if I had a helper, you know, Oriental boy, he couldn't go in with me. You see, he had to get up from the truck. They threw me outside the gate. And I go in and sometime, by that time, I got into my--lift up my myself.

GG: What kind of pass did you have to have?

JK: More like a--so long get a Dole Pineapple, Dole company and rest was for going into Matson. Whatever place you going in that was restrict. And plus your paycheck. But, once they know you, they'll let you go by. You know. But still the local people will let you go by, but not the military. Because we were enter them, they double check you. Unless they see you often.

I feel "Okay."

And then when the years went by it start getting little bit better and better. Because when the war break that Sunday, we all was ready to go to church. And we were living on Halekauwila and Coral Street. So my dad walk out.

He say, "Eh, Japan just bombed Pearl Harbor."

And that was 5 (minutes) to 7 (o'clock) that morning. But we still went to church. We walk up to Coral and Queen. Wait for the bus. And caught the bus to go to church. Up Kaimuki. Never take long. But 10 o'clock, my father's car, pick him up to go Pearl Harbor. Pick him up to go to work.

Then another boy came by and say, "We got to go work. Hawaiian Pine." So we went work and that day, that Sunday, I stayed one week down at Hickam...

GG: Submarine?

JK: Submarine down Hickam Air Field, air base. Stood there for one week. And that was pretty rough because my dad had night shift, I had day shift. So we didn't see each other at least, almost two, three months.

GG: Oh, my goodness. And when you were doing all that, were you still able to play music at that point?

JK: Yeah, yeah. But for the first two months, I think they couldn't because it was...

GG: Restricted? Martial law?

JK: Then right after I took my physical, I had call from Uncle Sam in 1942. And it's kind of cool that you could play but you play 6 [o'clock] you got to get off the street before 9 [o'clock]. And 10 [o'clock] get curfew. But if we be late, we used to get pass from the USED [United States Engineering Department]. They give us pass because whoever hire us have to get pass. Make sure that these people take us home.

GG: How did they get you home then? This was during blackout time, too, right?

JK: Yeah, blackout time. Yeah, but afterwards they made their own ways of getting you home. But once you with the army people or the navy, don't worry. They going get you home.

GG: Oh, were you actually in the army then?

JK: No, no. Played music for them. Yeah, see. So, we don't have to worry. If they get stopped, you stop in the army or navy. So many groups. Even Jesse (Kalima) them was in. And, we all had different way. The office was on Bishop and Hotel. On the corner where used to be Russell's (Menswear Store). And upstairs at the corner end of used to be Bishop and Union Streets. Union Street before they made a mall. Right on the corner like this what the... That top building upstairs that's where the USO office was. And everyday, we come up and each give us the base (to go to). And then we come downstairs. The trucks are lining up.

So we say, "So-and-so."

"Oh, right here."

Boom. We get in the car. Sometimes two cars, sometimes one car, we'd go. You'd never know where you going.

GG: And did they have a musicians' union at that time?

JK: We had but it wasn't--we still pay our dues. Had, but wasn't that strict. We had to pay our dues to keep up with what and what. We never take contract. See, in those days, if we did, I can't remember it. Because everything was paid through. When the army took over, the service took over, that was it. The union couldn't get in. See, but before that, the first people who used to organize the musicians' union, they took off with the money. So when we got into again, this man I.D. I.D. Petersen. When he got into office, till today, he still in office. And our union office was borrowed from the longshoremen [(ILWU) International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union]. Used to be on Queen Street and Kaahumanu. Right around the corner, upstairs. We used to borrow their hall to hold our meeting. And once he got in, and he still in too today. Almost 30-something years. And that, from there we move where McCully was, where that nightclub on Kalakaua and John Ena Road. We move up there. And then we move to

across the (present) Ilikai (Hotel) where that Discovery Bay (Condominiums) building is. But we still never own the building until they (ILWU) moved. On Kapiolani and Ward (Streets) across the Blaisdell Center. That place us members owned. That's our place (The Musician's Union Hall).

GG: When did the musicians' union start, or do you remember?

JK: Oh, way back. I joined it when I was 17 years old. But as I say, that first group we take took off with the money. And I don't know who. And we didn't have any office. We used to meet in the restaurant on Bethel Street to pay our dues.

(GG laughs)

JK: And that was good fun days. Until after the war, then I have to make up my mind whether to play music or work. Because, then, they start catching up with me. So I work Hawaiian Pine almost ten and a half years beside playing music. So, I left Hawaiian Pine 1947. And your father-in-law was still working there.

So I left, play music. Got into a group, my brother, which he's not living; he died when he was 28. And three other boys, which they all dead already. They all passed away. One died last year. And one, the guitar player died last year. My brother died 1954. The bass player died 1976. The steel guitar died 1957. So in that group, only me left.

GG: Were all those people from Kakaako? In that group, most or few?

JK: Well, me and my brother from Kakaako. Jimmy Kapuiki is from Ala Wai Canal, although he came from the Big Island. You know, Ala Wai used to have a Hawaiian Village there. Ala Wai, the river, the canal where you go over the bridge. Where all those big high-rise, that used to be a Hawaiian Village, I think.

GG: Oh, I see. Are you talking about where the Paoa's (an old-time property owning Hawaiian family) were? In that area?

JK: No, no. That's all John Ena Road. The one on Kalakaua Avenue, when you go over the bridge. All that big building. That used to be all Hawaiian Village over there. All Hawaiian people. Two of them used to stay there. Keawe Mahi and Kapuiki.

GG: Was that area like a Squattersville also?

JK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Before they had to move out. They put some (people in) Papakolea. Then they put some down here, Waimanalo, and that homestead and down at Nanakuli. And, my brother with me and them two was from down. And Keliikoa was from Pauoa Valley. He moved to Kakaako. And then, when Kapuiki got married, his family was

staying in Kakaako, on Cooke--between Cooke, Pohukaina and Auahi (Streets). In that area. The only one was away from us, after he had to move out from Ala Wai, he moved to the old pupule house on Lanakila Park. That used to be the old pupule house across where you have to check-up (i.e. tuberculosis check) you go for work. Work in the kitchen, you got to go up there, Lanakila. That used to be the old pupule house. Before they moved out. Down to Kaneohe.

GG: I see.

JK: And after the pupule people moved in Kaneohe, and they turned that house to a house, and that place to a house. And the boy that died last year, he used to stay there. Before he got an okay...

GG: Keep talking. I think we're just about through. I'm going to turn it over.

END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

JK: So when they moved that people down to Kaneohe, and they open that area for house. How much I don't know. This friend who died last year, heart attack, he was staying there till he got his papers from the Hawaiian Homes (Commission) to move Papakolea.

GG: Well, did you play music also...

JK: Yeah, all in that, but, when the war was over, I played at the old city...the one that had King and Liliha, which now they making, I think, a Jack-in-the-Box, next door. Right on the corner.

GG: Did they ever have parties in Kakaako that you played for?

JK: I played, yeah, yeah. I did. But, you know, when you play for families, it's (pay) nothing.

GG: Yeah, but what about, like, did they have celebrations on Kamehameha Day and luaus in the....

JK: I never get involved with that. I never did because I'm always doing something before they ask me. When they ask me, I say, "I got to work." See. Maybe one year I did but I had to do the thing 10 o'clock in the morning on the parade and get out of there by 1 (o'clock), to 2 (o'clock). But, you see, I would never do that again because you all day in the sun. Going on that float. But, from there, city, then we (parade) went down to King, ah, Nuuanu and Queen (Streets). That place used to call "Pagoda" right next to the old police station (Bethel Street). Then, from there, went out to "Barbeque" which is across the Ambassador Hotel, used to be Lau Yee Chai's. On the corner. Across the street where the Texaco and the Halekoa Hotel, on Kalakaua,

that used to be Barbeque Inn, Palm Tree and the Dragon's Tent. Next door to the Maluhia army place.

GG: And what about--I know when they had political rallies in Kakaako.

JK: Well, I played for only one man. The old father, David Trask, Sr. But I was young. I was maybe 12 years old, I played for him.

GG: And did he come and do campaigning in Kakaako?

JK: Yeah, yeah. All of those. That's where mama used to play for. My dad used to sing for Republican, my mother used to play for Democratic (Party).

GG: Oh. (Laughs) That must have been interesting.

JK: Yeah, because my dad never play any instrument but he used to sing for the Republicans. But, when he get into that booth, he votes Democrat. See, but those days, was good days, you know. Put you on the truck and tell you all around. You know. But I played for David Trask since I couldn't remember. And then from there, Barbeque, and that 1947, and then we used to have bottle clubs, Gael.

GG: Have what?

JK: Bottle club. Those days. So we get through at maybe 12:45, 1:00 (a.m.). There was place next to KGMB (radio station) called the Shag. On Kapiolani (Boulevard). And we start, would be 1:30 or as soon as we get there. But everybody, we'd go in one car, all of us, there's no way of losing (anyone). The only time we'd get lost if we get crack-up. We run. We get through at Barbeque and run down there and play. I think that was enough. Then they closed down the bottle club. See, you bring your own beer, but they serve you ice and water. And that was the whole thing. That was extra money after the nightclub, the regular nightclub job.

GG: And were they--the bottle clubs--were they open to the public or you had to like...

JK: Yeah, open after 1 (o'clock) and close 6 (o'clock) or 5 (o'clock) in the morning. Had one, had the Shack, the Lamp Post. Oh, had about at least half a dozen. Had two in town on the corner of Hotel and Alakea (Streets). Had one upstairs and the next corner on Bishop and Hotel (Streets) used to have a bar called Gibson, upstairs. Beside the Brown Derby on across the Liberty Theater on Nuuanu (Avenue). And Rialto on Hotel and Bethel Street, next to that small lane. That used to be, still yet, Rialto. And Wonder Bar used to be on Bethel Street, between Hotel and King Street.

GG: And how did you get the job? Did you have a leader in your group that took care of all of that?

JK: Well, one of the boys was the leader. Say, "Eh, we go."

You know, But, we used to go, oh, either one car or two car. But I used to pick up my brother because my brother at the time, was staying up Manoa housing, I think. And only boy that I don't pick up is the bass player. He lives at the Lanakila housing. So naturally, I only-- the other boy, Jacob, the steel player, he live just one block away from me. So I pick him up and I pick up my brother at Manoa and then we meet at work.

But lot of time, we call one another if we know we can't make it in time. But, we going make the job but we going be a little bit late. See. We call one another. So there's always somebody at work. So if you think you comin' late, if you don't come on the time we supposed to start, we start without you. See, when you come in, you just bring your instrument and they squeeze right in and you play. We don't wait for you. Because, you know, maybe the boss will let you go for couple of times, but not every time. Don't make a habit, see. That was the whole thing.

GG: Now, going way back, you said that you had gone to Latter Day Saints Church in Kakaako when you were small?

JK: Yeah, small time.

GG: Where was the church?

JK: On Ilaniwai and Cooke Street.

GG: And it had how many members?

JK: Oh, I don't know. When you small you just go to please your grandfolks, I think, you know.

(GG laughs)

JK: And then, you know, they just write one talk (sermon) and you sit down. You know, just like this, and all the way, you know. And then, and after that then we go home and then we go around the island. Then, he (grandfather) go visit his brothers. So, Sundays is not a thing that you plan to make something. You can't plan, 'cause you know what your father and mother wants. And that was it.

GG: And what age or how old were you when you were going to church?

JK: Maybe, I was about five, six years old at that time.

GG: And then when did you stop going to church?

JK: Well, as soon as my grandfolks--my grandmother died first. But that's the time we were staying where your father-in-law was staying (Kapaehulu).

GG: 'Cause then you had mentioned now you were on your way to church when the (Second World) War broke out.

JK: But that was different then. Kaimuki. That church was Lanakila. Was a Protestant church. See, grandpa died before the war. Both of them. So naturally we on our own. So my dad didn't try to be just like his father to say you got to do this, you got to do that.

GG: Right. Well, when you were little and going to the Latter Day Saints Church in Kakaako did they have things for children, too?

JK: Yeah, we used to go Sunday school. But, what I learn, I don't know.

(GG laughs)

JK: Don't ask. You know, just to get---I think, we just had to please because that was (what) my mother and dad had to do.

GG: Yeah. Were there mostly Hawaiians going to that church or other nationalities?

JK: Oh, most Hawaiian, most Hawaiian people. And then, as I say, we used to go every Sunday and they used to visit my grandfather's brother's uncle. You know, tutu-man and all that. Laie, Nanakuli.

GG: Yeah. And, your neighbors, right close by when you were growing up when you were small, were they mostly Hawaiians, too?

JK: Yeah, all Hawaiian. The Hau family, Wilson family. But next to my tutu-man was the Rocha family. And the rest was all Hawaiian. Kaliwi, Palanapas, Opipalos, Palakinis. The Filipinos had their own camp.

GG: Whereabouts was this?

JK: Was down by Kewalo Basin. On Ala Moana and Ward (Streets).

GG: Were there very many of them?

JK: Oh. Plenty. Beside boxes that come from Philippines, our place and our area, mostly was Kakaako, Palama and Kalihi was. That's where you could find all the Filipinos. But Palama was the Hawaiian, Filipino, and the Japanese and Chinese and the Puerto Ricans in that area. So Kakaako was mostly Hawaiian and Portuguese and Filipino. But Hawaiian were one section, Portuguese was one section. Japanese was one section. Because if you mention one Japanese name, you know where they live. Go to their place. You don't go scatter. You know, where the Japanese. Not too much Chinese. Because the Chinese used to own the stores so we don't get hard time with them. They the one that own the store, the bakery.

(Laughter)

GG: See Kau Bakery was the...

JK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. See Kau and Buck's Bakery. They final or they the landlords. See. So we didn't have hard time.

GG: But did the various groups get together to do things from time to time?

JK: I think so. I think so. You know, being in an entertainer and playing music, I hardly was around then.

GG: Yeah.

JK: I never got myself to play in the park all the time.

GG: What about before you started playing music when you were going to school?

JK: Well, I was mostly with the Hawaiian kids, but don't ask me how smart I was.

GG: What did you folks do for fun? Play after school or did you play with the kids?

JK: I played. I played, but I didn't play too much. Mostly like football, baseball. Every night we used to play on the grass. (Gestures like tossing knives).

GG: Oh, like mumbly-peg? (Knife game)

JK: Yeah. Used to play...staying in the hole and used to try steal the next one. Put 'em around the ring and you know, get into the circle. And then, put the bulldurham bag. And we used to jump from building to building. You know. And, oh. Shoot.

(GG laughs)

GG: What do you mean, jumping from building to building?

JK: Because the building--the school building--was closed. So, we don't play down. You know. So that's how I got hurt. I dislocate my arm. Was six years old. Never again. (Laughs)

GG: No more jumping buildings. Now, did you play in the neighborhood, too?

JK: Sometime in the park. And Saturdays, I used to play for the park program. For Mother Waldron Park. I don't know how many years I played for them. Then when you grow older you don't mind playing, but you want to get money.

GG: Yeah. That was, you mean, playing music?

JK: Yeah, yeah. You know. But, as long as you could do it, you go. I do it but if I'm involved with a group, I don't want to take it, you see.

I say, "You go ask them."

Because I don't want to go by myself because I rather have a group backing me up.

GG: Oh, yeah.

JK: All those things put together, I wasn't particular who I played with. If they didn't do what they think that I could do, I don't care. As long as I know what I can't do. And then, if they say they musician, if they can't follow and I not going tell them because I didn't know the chords. I couldn't tell them. I only know when my fingers go and what I'm doing.

I couldn't tell them, "Oh, C-7, G-7."

Those days was second-F, second-G, second-C, and things like that. But, today, they talk to you by sevens. Everything. I know where my fingers go but I can't tell you. Only few things I know but the rest I can't because I remember where to put.

GG: Do you read music?

JK: No.

GG: I see. You play by ear then? Yeah. Well, how come it's changed over time? I mean, why did they call it (chords) one thing before and now they call it something else?

JK: Well, you see, when people start going to school, music teacher had that. Say, when you get into the ninth grade and then play, they started getting all those things inside. But before that they never did have. They just teach you the basic. They tell you what and what. There was a man at Pohukaina that used to make ukulele with cigar box.

GG: Oh, for goodness sake.

JK: Yeah. What you call that, Portuguese?

GG: Was he one of the teachers?

JK: Yeah, he was one of the teachers.

GG: And he made ukuleles out of cigar boxes?

JK: Yeah, cigar box. I think he still living. He lives in Maui now.

Gonsalves, yeah. That's what I heard. One day I was talking to somebody. He say, "Oh, I think he didn't pass away. And, he's one foot shortage." And my sixth grade teacher was Mrs. Vierra.

GG: She passed away recently didn't she?

JK: No, no, no, no, no, no.

GG: She is still around?

JK: She still living.

GG: Do you know where she is?

JK: I don't know. She lives on Kewalo Street. Makiki. One of those apartments up there. Maybe she's with the senior citizens, I don't know. That was my sixth grade teacher. My first grade teacher was Mrs. White. She died. My second grade teacher was Mrs. Wong. I think she died.

GG: Did the kids play music in school at all, too?

JK: Well, Pohukaina used to teach us. But I never did take it until when I'm all through school. I used to go home, then I used to play. Then, I used to take uke, go in the park and sing. If we do, then we used to tell we having a assembly and we giving the program. Then, all right, then, you know. You play for the, whatever. But after that, that was it. You just put back the cigar box back into where he belong and he play.

(GG laughs)

JK: See. Then, when I get home, I start playing in the park. Until today. And then, I left here 1959, to go to the Mainland. Along with (musicians) Johnny Spencer, George Paoa. And a boy called Babalou Davis. When Hawaii became state, 1959. And, after that, then I start working with Andy Cummings. Few other groups. Then 1950, I work at the old Niumalu where Hawaiian Village is now.

But, Gael, I played with lot of musicians. See. But, each group you play with, they got different ideas. Its' like putting my hands together and counting. The best man I play with is the man I playing with now, but, I know why he's so strict. Because he knows his music. Maybe now that he knows, that's what he wants. But, before that, I don't think he make anything. So, lucky thing, with all my playing with different (people) because I played with lot of boys. Sometime I make mistake but most times they never change me. They correct me, but they never change.

And they never tell me, "Oh, you holding the wrong chord."

Because, they like me, because I never stand still. I always moving. In other words, I'm a guy that push. I'm not a soloist ukulele but when I grab that instrument, when I start playing either you moved with me or I don't care. Even if we play a number that is style, I try to bring it up where you have a beat to it. So, with Jesse (Kalima), he likes you to play, always have a chord into the cracks, before you get to the main chord (between chords). But, you know, when you this old, you kind of--but you try. Do the best you can. And sometime, I move too fast. My fingers move too fast. So I know I'm doing wrong but it's too late. It's gone. So when you come back again (next time), I won't do it.

GG: Yeah. So, how often are you playing now?

JK: Oh, once in a month or so. Every month maybe we play about three, four private jobs. So that's enough.

GG: So you play mostly private parties kind of thing?

JK: Yeah. And a lot for Sheraton Waikiki people. The people that run the Sheraton Hotel. A lot for them. See. But he (Jesse Kalima) always take me with him. No matter what the outcome, he takes me with him. But it took me five years, Gael. I never play with the man before. He's the hardest man I ever work with. Strict. Especially music. He know his chords. You can't hold only one chord. You know. He look at you. That's the only bad habit he has. See, you know, he shows it. So but, I laugh all the time but not too much. I can't laugh too much. Too many times. But, I learn a lot from him. And, the chords that he teaches me that he wants nice play, so I get no regrets about it. But, lucky thing, I know what I'm doing. If I didn't know what I'm doing, I wouldn't be this far, because that's why they wonder how come I could play, because when I play music and sing it, my eyes is closed. But my fingers moving. See. Here and there and there too. Today. Kids today.

Like Mama made 80 years old Saturday. We gave her a party. We played. And young kids were there. They wonder why--amazed to find then yesterday I played for them. And, I couldn't get out of it. My brother, he went in and he slept. So naturally I got to entertain those people outside until the time I have to come and get ready and go to the wake at Mililani.

So, when I left 4:00 p.m. he (nephew) say, "Where you goin' uncle?"

I said, "I got to go wake. My cousin's wife passed away. I got to go. I'm sorry." So he look at me.

He says, "Eh." My nephew stay play. But they play this (popular) folks music now. But, I don't care if they don't holding the right chord. As long as they know what key I'm playing. And, if they go

around me, I don't care. Because I'm not particular. Because I know what I'm doing. I not going to scold them because I don't know myself. If I knew the chord to tell, then all right. That's different. But, I don't. I don't know that half of fountain. But, I know where this finger is for. So, I just do it.

GG: Are there any old songs about Kakaako?

JK: No, ah, shucks.

GG: Has any ever been written about...

JK: They do. But I never was a writer, Gael. I have known lot of Hawaiian songs, but, when you play with one Hawaiian group you sing a different way, because they want their own arrangement. All right? Maybe you play with that group one year, two year. Then, something happen. You go to another group. Same song, but different ideas.

GG: Uh hm. So then, you have to learn little bit new ways.

JK: Yeah. Yeah. But, the harmony is just alto, tenor and soprano. Only few times you sing the fourth part and do whatever you have to. But, you no can sing too much, too many times the fourth part. It's just the three part harmony. But the best way of singing is three part harmony, because if anybody sing, you know how to sing. But if you make four part harmony, one boy sing he throw them off. So make it simple. If somebody is sick somebody can always carry on. So that's the only thing I can thank myself being that I can sing with anybody and play with anybody. I'm not particular. I not going to tell them.

But when they play with me and when they tell, "Ah, okay, Uncle Joe, do your thing." If they can't follow me, I no care. I can't help it. They can't keep up with me, I not going to worry. I just go.

GG: Well, I think maybe we can leave it at that for today. We covered most of the things I wanted to talk to you about, I think. So, and it's 10 o' clock (a.m.) right now.

JK: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Tape No. 3-45-2-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Joseph M. Kekauoha Jr. (JK)

March 17, 1978

Waimanalo, Oahu, Hawaii

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

JK: Yes, they--I neva attend this thing. (Washington Intermediate School reunion). I had to work.

GG: Nice that they sent you the copy (of the reunion yearbook), though.

JK: This woman that took it, she took it from this guy that died, Tony Tadako. He died so before that she took the whole; she bought a book of what he wrote. All the musicians signed so got ahold, she call me up. She ask me (to sign too).

GG: Okay, let me just say this is the second interview with Joe Kekauoha in his home in Waimanalo and the date is March 17, 1978. Okay, I would like to ask you a few more questions based on what we already talked about before. And I wondered, do you know why your mother first came to Kakaako? Or how she happened to move there?

JK: Well, she left Hilo when she was eight years old. And she came and stay with her uncle and auntie. More like the... Step-father, her folks because my grandma, I think her father and mother sent her down here.

GG: Was she hanai then to this...

JK: No. Well, you know, under day care they felt that she was hanai but not exactly. And there was another girl with her. Her name was Lei Ludloff. And that was her grandma adopted her. But she's a Ludloff girl but she wasn't brought up with the Ludloff family. And she's from Hilo. You heard of the Ludloff that had--I don't know--they had cracker business. Soda crackers. Business in Hilo. So my mother and her were just like taken in, you know.

GG: Brought up like sisters.

JK: Brought up as two sisters.

GG: And, now, was your mother married the first time on the Big Island or in Honolulu?

JK: No. Honolulu.

GG: Oh, I see. Was that she was living in Kakaako at that time?

JK: When she married she married a fella named Simeona Kaaihue. And then she divorce him because she was getting beat up all the time. And that's how she married--when she divorce him, then she married my dad.

GG: Do you know how she met your father?

JK: Because they all come from Kakaako.

GG: Were they neighbors or do you know?

JK: Yeah, in one way or the other. I think they were neighbors. But just like from here to across the street. First husband, was living maybe like close to the beach and he (my dad) was living close to the park because where the park is now, before that would be right up till early 1920's. The park was a City and County yard then.

GG: That was---what was the name of the park? Do you remember?

JK: Now it's Mother Waldron Park. But before that, that used to be the City and County yard... Before they moved down toward Ala Moana by Kewalo Basin. But at that time Kewalo Basin was a rubbish dump. Where you have to dump the rubbish and they burn ova there everyday.

GG: Right. You had talked before about the smell of the burning. I wondered, that was the rubbish dump at Kewalo Basin?

JK: Yeah, Kewalo Basin. Almost half-way in the middle of Kewalo Basin. And towards Armstrong. Right in the middle.

GG: I see. And that's when they burned the rubbish there, that's what caused the smell?

JK: And that. And besides the tuna packing where used to be on Cooke and Auahi Street--right on the corner. Before they move it down to Kewalo Basin.

GG: And did they do this burning everyday?

JK: Well, maybe every other day, I think, before they build the incinerator. I don't know. I forgot what year they made the incinerator. Maybe was in 1930's. Just before World War II anyway, the incinerator was up. But after that they changed it. They build another one at Kapalama. Do you remember?

GG: No, I don't.

JK: Kapalama. They build another one there. But that was too close to the houses. That's Palama. So maybe the trucks take only the rubbish there, only paper, box or whatever. Nothing like whatever people throw in the rubbish. And then they used to take rubbish down to Nanakuli and dump it until they built...

GG: Out here at Kapaa (Kailua, Oahu).

JK: Yeah.

GG: Okay. Another thing, now, you had talked about your dad gambling. Where did he gamble?

JK: Right around in Kakaako.

GG: But at one place special?

JK: No, every week different place.

GG: At different people's houses?

JK: Well, it used to be two places--Magoon Block or Kumalae Block. Magoon Block was named after American Sanitary Laundry. They're the family used to own the laundry. They own that whole block from Cooke Street, Queen Street into South Street. That whole block they own. And across the street of that block is Kumalae Block. Another Hawaiian people that used to own the block plus the poi factory in the back. But, if they did go someplace else, I don't know.

GG: And did they just gather at one of the...

JK: Maybe one of the room upstairs.

GG: Yeah. And did they do this often?

JK: Every weekend.

GG: I see. At night or daytime?

JK: Well, night time. Dad would go to work Friday morning. You wouldn't see him till Sunday evening.

(GG laughs)

GG: He'd go from work to...

JK: Straight to work. Yeah. And I think why my dad did that because, you know, in order to get extra money because like before that, my dad used to stay with my grandfather. So, my grandfather used to take his paycheck. So that's the only means he going get any extra money. But when he move out that was a habit with him.

GG: If he gave his father his paycheck how did he get extra money to gamble?

JK: The mother would give the money. But not the amount that he wants and so he would go gamble on that.

GG: Right. Did they play cards or do you know how they gambled?

JK: I think everything. Everything.

GG: Dice?

JK: Dice. Blackjack. Poker. Whatever. Because I neva see 'em gamble but my mama used to want something she used to send me, so I used to go. Then I would go to watchman. And then I talk to him. So he goes upstairs. So, when he come down he give me the money what I ask and then I go. That's all.

GG: So it was illegal at that time to be gambling or nobody bothered?

JK: Nobody bothered.

GG: Well, why did they have a watchman?

JK: In case the policemen come.

GG: And do you have any idea what kind of stakes they played for?

JK: No.

GG: What was your mother's reaction to his gambling?

JK: Nothing, nothing. Because that's what he do only on weekends. And those days, well, a dollar can stretch for a long time. You know a dollar can buy two days of meal. You see. So, I think daddy only was making \$14 a week where he work. And he was only 14 years old and he had to go work.

GG: Did you ever gamble yourself?

JK: No. If I did, I always (lose). I'm not a good gambler.

(GG laughs)

GG: You had mentioned it was considered bad luck to interrupt the game.

JK: Yeah, that's the feelings. You go up there and maybe he's making money. But you see, the house neva lose money. They always have so much percentage like that, I think. So my dad always told us, "No." You know, when he come home, he would give whatever but he wouldn't give out of his own pocket. And then at the end of the day whatever, when the game get through, then they would make up the difference.

Whatever he gave me and that would be counted on him, on his side, see. They wouldn't take it for him, from while they gamble because to them they feel that once they lend money out it won't be the same. The money would go to somebody else. They making the money after that. But most time my dad, either my dad was running the game or somebody else but he was one of the housemen. You see, you know. Hold the game.

GG: Did it ever take place at your house then?

JK: No, never did. Not that I know of.

GG: And did he win pretty consistently or do you know?

JK: Well, people who holds gambling--whose in charge of it--they neva lose. They always make something because if they do make over the percentage that they supposed to then I don't know. But I think my mama neva ask him. If they did, well, it's between the two. But you know, when you young you don't ask your dad. All you want this money--a nickel or a quarter to go buy candy, that's it. Ice cream. You don't ask for the rest you know. So I neva did.

GG: Was that mostly Hawaiians that got together and gambled?

JK: All nationalities. Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese. All in that area. They used to gamble. Hawaiians don't gamble too much. It's Oriental. Not Hawaiians. Oriental--Filipino.

GG: Did they play any Oriental or Filipino games that you're aware of? Did they gamble?

JK: Not that I know of.

GG: Did he ever go to the chicken fights?

JK: If he did, I don't know. Because if he did I was neva sent to--because I always know where he's going. He always tell us where he'll be if we need him.

GG: Yeah. Also, now, I understand that at Kawaiahao Court, they used to get together and jam and play music on weekends.

JK: That part I don't know. I neva go that side. I was always on the park side, see. So we used to play music in the park--end up in the schoolyard. Pohukaina School.

GG: Was this when you were real small?

JK: Yeah, yeah.

GG: About how many of you?

JK: Oh, about five of us or six of us. I was about eight, nine years old.

GG: And you would do this after school?

JK: No. Right after evening when the sun go down we start playing. In those days the cops neva do anything unless you do something. And if they do come they get a hell of a time finding us because, you know, you know how to get in and hide a place where the cops can't get in. But those days the cops, they know who you are. They didn't have to chase you.

GG: Were most of the policemen in Kakaako Hawaiians at that time?

JK: Yeah, they all were six feet, six feet one--all tall people. They would come straight to your house. They wouldn't go and talk to you. They talk to your parents. See. And then they let the parents tell you, you see. But I neva did have hard time with my grandfolks. The only thing I neva like to stay with my grandfolks because they always talk Hawaiian. So naturally when you young you thinking what that. The only time they talk Hawaiian is because they don't want you to know what they talking about. And you know it's about you. That's the only feeling that you have. Because if they don't talk Hawaiian then nothing is said about you. But when they start talking that mean it's about you because you there. They looking at you and then they talking. You know, they talking. Them two old folks they talking in Hawaiian. Maybe he talk, he say, "Man, this kid he no understand, you know." And he say, oh, this and that, and can't do this and can't do that.

GG: Did your parents talk Hawaiian at all?

JK: No.

GG: And did you learn at all?

JK: Only when I wanted to sing then I learn it from my mother. But my mother and dad talk Hawaiian if they want, as I say, if they don't want us to know what they want to talk about.

GG: Do you know why they didn't teach you children?

JK: Because we neva bug them to teach us. We neva ask them to teach us. You see. We neva interested. We just left it alone. We neva tell them. Today some of them will think, "Oh, how come our parents neva teach us." But we just can't say about it because that time and now is two different things.

GG: Yeah. From what you said, you moved around quite a bit when you were young and you lived with family quite a bit.

JK: Well, mostly my mama's sister. I think we stayed with her--one, two--we stayed two times up and one, the first time I stayed was up Lusitana.

Up Punchbowl. And the second time, Circle Lane, right by the waterworks, you know, where that big medical building is. And the third time was out at Kapahulu. Winam and Hunter Street. Up Kapahulu. And then from there on that's it. That was the last time. But when you small no matter what you say, it's not your decision.

GG: Oh, yes.

JK: Yeah. But you felt but already I start playing music, see. So, you know in your heart that the kids are making trouble so I think it's best we stay by ourself. If we fight ourselves then we got in more trouble. But when you with cousins it's hard. Though my auntie had 1, 2, 3, 4--I think she had four children at that time. Four or five. And mama had five. So, you know, I mean, you can't blame.

The kids say, "Oh, not me. Him."

And he say, "Not me. Her." You know. And then that's how you get argument among two sisters. The husbands won't argue. It's the sisters. My auntie.

So I told my mother, I said, "We better go back and stay by ourself. We better because we better off by ourself."

GG: I just wondered if it was a common custom in the Hawaiian families?

JK: No, it's just one of those things that you go good couple of months and all of a sudden--boom--you into you know. Maybe because at that time you don't think about it. Now you live too long you get into that rut. You always fighting. So when you grow older you walk away from it. You leave it alone I think. But those days, never, because they always fighting. But my auntie neva believe, she felt that her children was right. Not us. So might as well just get away from it, you know, because that way they going to hate you. Not too much your uncle because he neva bother. But my auntie, you know. But it seems like every time my mother is always involved with my auntie. That's her older sister which she died 1959. So, for whatever it is, she was good but my uncle, the husband was good; very good. And he's the Todd family from the Big Island. And lot of time, as I say, your father-in-law used to come down our house. And I played with your father-in-law. I was about maybe 10, 10 years old when I start playing with your father-in-law. Hang around the part ova there. Maunaloa and Winam the corner. Play. In those days the policeman used to come and they neva bother. Neighbors neva complain too much noise because what you want know for; for music, free, you know. And at one time at the corner of Maunaloa and Winam, Sterling Mossman mother used to stay at the corner. Mrs. Bina Mossman. So quite a few people that used to stay. Even on that corner till today they get this Kapono, Cecilio and Kapono. Well, that boy mother and dad--the dad is still there; not the mother. The uncle still there. And I think Kapono stays there, too. But not Charlie. Charlie used to hang around the beach,

that's how I know. Charlie went school with my brother--the other brother. So, you know, you put all that together--Mokihana, Paliuli--below Sixth Avenue, Winam and Maunaloa, all that. That area at one time was nothing but kiawe trees. So, you sometimes today you wish you had the money to buy, which if my auntie was smart enough--that's my dad's sister. She's still be living in that area but...

GG: That was Kapahulu?

JK: Yeah, that's between down below Sixth Avenue on Mokihana Street. She lost the place.

GG: How did she lose it?

JK: Well, when you live alone out on the land you can't keep up. That was it.

GG: Also you mentioned that you weren't able to sing or talk for one year. How did that happen?

JK: Well, those days you neva believe Hawaiians, they jealous of one Hawaiian. Till today, but today, after that you believe me but, Hawaiians today, till today you only go through so much. So way up and that's it because the next Hawaiian won't help you. They bring you down. Not in front your face but in the back. Soon you turn around. But, if you neva did think about it and you neva think that somebody is jealous about you. So I played with the group. The son was a good musician and a good singer. But I was a little better than he is. But I neva thought that I was better than him. I would only felt that as long as I work and enjoy myself and I enjoy them, they enjoy me--that's the main thing. It took some church members, after I found out, then what can you do after you find out? All you have to do, I hope that one day they--not them, their parents got jealous. But just before he died he said he sorry what he did. So, those kind of people they believe in two Gods--the God of offering, they keep something with them. So the one that they keep is the one that eat them up because those kind of things, some of them, you got to take care. And they want offering. And if you don't take care and you don't feed them what they supposed to be fed, you get it. But God knows. We keep on asking repent, repent. God repent. But not them. And that makes you go buy, lot of things that sometime you don't have the money to buy. To feed (the gods)--especially the fish. Expensive fish that, mullet, that's very expensive. They no ask cheap fish. And they tell 'em what they--and this person is they call it kahuna. They tell you where to go out and do it. Where to drop it. I know, by doing it, my mother used to tell me. But when you grow older and you learn what people tell you in the line of religion, so you not afraid. But better than losing everything from, you know, the whole works. But, I have no regrets that what I have first and what I have now. Now, maybe, now I'm more--because all my life, I lost my voice. My high voice just like a woman's...

GG: Falsetto?

JK: Falsetto. And in what after I got back my voice and I could sing I have made people enjoy themselves. No matter what length of time they come in to. Maybe some of them just walk in. Just want to get away from the-- sit down, then talk with them. Entertain them. In that short time I help many of them. We get the word.

GG: At that time were you frightened?

JK: I was but when these people told my mother and dad I had to do it. He felt so he had to do it--so, the woman say, "Well, we know how you like to go weekends gamble. You have to make up your mind whether if you save your son." So, he made up his mind. But it took a long time for him pay the gambling off. And what he did, that was it.

GG: May I ask how did you find out that you had been kahunaed?

JK: Yeah, by the church people.

GG: But I mean you just woke up one morning and couldn't sing?

JK: No. Because like Tuesdays they had people go to different houses--they call that komo kauhale. Tuesday Gospel. Maybe some people in Kakaako, some people in Kalihi like that. But these people was in Kakaako, they came to my house last. They didn't know anything. So when they came down I was in the backroom.

And then my mother open the door. Say, "Oh, can we hold church service?" So my mother let them in. So when they keep on going, so whoever open up the scripture, come to the end, almost end 12 o' clock. When 12 o' clock come then the service all done. And one of the head lady ask if there was a sick person in the house. They didn't know.

My mother said, "Yeah." And when they saw me, then they knew who I was. Then they start telling me, telling my mother, what they could do and what my mother have to do if my mother wants faith, whatever. So, my dad came home from work, my mother had to tell my dad. And that's all. That's how I got myself back. They don't promise nothing. But they said I could come out of it. But they don't promise like I can sing like I used to. But I won't sing.

GG: And was, then, did the church people come back from time to time and visit?

JK: No, we just call. And then, from there on that was it. And from there was all on our own. Then when I got back my voice to talk, then I carry my own. I wanted know how it feels to carry your own troubles. And I went myself.

GG: What do you mean you went yourself?

JK: I didn't have my father and mother to let them tell me what I have to do. That's how I found out who was the...

GG: And by them, you mean the people from the church?

JK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

GG: And which church was this?

JK: The Living God, Ka Makua Mau Loa. That church. Those people.

GG: And did they have a branch in Kakaako?

JK: At that time neva had. Neva had a branch.

GG: Kakaako people went to where the church was?

JK: So Kalihi, yeah. But they got people like who was, that was their work that they try to heal people. Some they promise too much that you take things for granted. Some they don't promise you. You have to do it yourself.

GG: Would you consider this a form of hooponopono at all?

JK: Yeah.

GG: Yeah. And were there mostly Hawaiian people that went to this church?

JK: All different mixture. Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian like that. Filipino. The church is still up. It's Kamukumalu, but from there we went, then a dinner hall had. Then mama them, when mama got sick, the people that I went to didn't handle mama. So mama went to another church. Same branch but different people. Kaimuki. I went to there. But, as I say, I no like people talk about. What I tell you is what I tell you. I don't want anybody else know about my problem. So when you hear that somebody else know about your problem, you feel funny. And the lady that I used to go with, go to, she passed away. So, you just don't want not anybody handle you. Until I went to another man. And this man I like him. He tell, but ever since I've been home now. Okay. I hate people, you know, like all churches, they don't see you for a long time, take you as you are when you come that moment and seat you.

No tell, "Where you been? How come this and that?" And then quick in your mind they talking or maybe this guy coming back but he wants help. And that's bad. So, I think it's almost about three years now.

I just told mama, "Don't go."

GG: Can I ask how long ago it was when you lost your voice? How old were you at the time?

JK: I think I was about 15.

GG: And then, now you talked about mullet fish and things like this.

JK: But that was before when I was baby.

GG: Oh, I see.

JK: That's how mama used to do. Everytime mama have to take me to the Big Island. Then I get well. But that's how she used to do. To do what she have to do.

GG: With the fish now, does that have to do with like an aumakua or that kind of thing?

JK: Well, I don't know because I was just a baby.

GG: But when you were 15 it was primarily through church or prayers and talking and that kind of thing?

JK: But today, anyway you know, no matter what you know, you still make mistakes. But God always repent you; when you repent yourself sometime you have to cry.

GG: That's true.

JK: You got to cry to tell Him "please." And then, you know, and that thing take time. You don't expect you cry and argue you like 'em now. Takes time. So I know all this. So just happen, I just heard that I could first Sunday I can go when mama goes to church. And not go to my church. So I'm thinking about it. Have not till next month. First of the month. Maybe I do go there. That way they won't know why I come up there but I can still take Sacrament Sunday. Because I spend about almost four years. I have to pay to church. It's not that I don't like it. But I hate people when they talk. Greet me the way I am at that moment. But don't greet me and then, "Oh, shit..." You don't have to talk. Just by looking at you I know what you thinking because you can tell. Maybe I think he need help. He wants help.

But this particular person that I used to go, he always tell me, "You do this. You don't have to run back to be one da kine."

That's the same thing what my sister tells me. She always says, "Just do this, do that. That's good. Ask God. You repent even if somebody do you dirt, you just ask God and repent. You said about this certain people personally. And that's the only way because can help you. Because you ask help and you don't repent, can't do nothing. You not going get anything. You got to repent. And you got to be patient."

GG: What is the name of the church now in Kaimuki?

JK: That's Lanikila. But that's the same branch with Ka Makua Mau Loa, the Church of the Living God up Mokauea Street. But they not together. At one time they were. But they independent that church up there. But same teacher, everything.

GG: Were there very many people from Kakaako that went to the one in Kalihi? Do you know offhand?

JK: Yeah a lot of 'em went there. Lot of them because when Kakaako was move out they had their church called "Aidenaho."

GG: Called what?

JK: Aidenaho. Used to be right on Auahi. Kiawe. Right next to Hawaiian Printing Shop. That's where the church was but that land belong to Bishop Estate. So, the people have to get out. And those days was Honolulu Paper Company. Now it's something else. And that whole block was the Stanley family used to own. But I think they sold it to a Mainland people. But that whole area is belong to Honolulu Paper Company. Up to the corner that still get the printing shop. It's still at the corner. Kiawe and Auahi.

GG: And was that church then--that was incorporated into the Kalihi church?

JK: Yeah, yeah. Because then when they took away the land they have to condemn the church. So all those people went into Ka Makua Mau Loa.

GG: Do you remember approximately when the church was condemned--the land there? Was it before the war?

JK: Oh, yeah. After the war.

GG: So when the people just moved up to Kalihi and started going to church up there?

JK: Yeah, yeah.

GG: Also I think I asked you this before but I can't remember. Did you play music any place in Kakaako?

JK: When I was young, I played right in Kakaako, just in the park or on the corner like that, night time. That's all.

GG: But did you play professionally anywhere in Kakaako later on?

JK: Well, only for luaus. If baby luau or whatever. Played there. You know, most time ova there was family thing. But if there was money involved I have to go out. In town, the bars, like up at Kalihi, King, Dillingham and Liliha used to have an inn there called "City Inn." Nuuanu

and Ala Moana. Pagoda. Barbeque and many other private clubs. Like Mid-Pacific used to right on Richard and Hotel Street. Was right next to the Cadillac. Right now that's where YMCA is. That's where the, what you call, the Capital building is. Where the bus turn. That's where Mid-Pacific used to be. A private club. And right next to that corner on Beretania and Richard used to be the Scotty Schuman Cadillac place. On the corner. And across the street was the Governor's house.

GG: Yeah. Did you play at the Mid-Pacific Club?

JK: Yeah. Different clubs, they make their own party. Then we go up and play.

GG: And were these mostly for--well, who would be at these parties? What kind of people?

JK: Well, the members. I think the people that...

GG: Was that all haoles in those days at Mid-Pac?

JK: No, mix, mix. All mix. But majority was Oriental people. Hawaiian-Chinese, Chinese, Japanese like that. Not too much haoles.

GG: Can you explain what bottle clubs are in those days?

JK: Well, those days, you have to bring in your own bottle and you pay for the ice. Whatever the ice charge. And that was made after from 2 o'clock a.m. on.

GG: After the bars had closed?

JK: Yeah.

GG: Then you could go to a bottle club.

JK: Yeah, bring your own bottle.

GG: And did you leave your bottles there?

JK: No.

GG: Or you just brought it in for little while? And also you had talked about when you were small, jumping from building to building and I think you got hurt one year? Why did you do that?

(INTRODUCTION OF NIECE)

JK: No, I neva jump on this one. The only time I wen go jumping is because when Hawaiian Pine--the first, if you heard, Hawaiian Pine was on strike and your father-in-law was still working for Hawaiian Pine. When on strike--1947. So we went on strike. Only one day. So the next day

we was called back. So we went back to Robello School which is on Robello Lane and King. That's where somebody was chasing me. So, I neva jump building to building but when I was young, yeah. Oh, I was like six, seven years old. Was down Pohukaina School. Yeah, you jump one building-- you get more guts than nerve, you know. Everything it goes when you were small. That age. But at the age when I was working with Hawaiian Pine, I just happen and I had a jacket on me. So when I tried to grab the pole I grabbed my sleeve. I just missed. The faucet down. Just clip the faucet. So they took me to the hospital. Then I told them how to get in touch with my mother. And then, that's why I was like (prone) this going to the Queen's Hospital. And then the doctor came and our family doctor was Dr. Thomas Fujiwara. So he came. "What happened now?" "Ahh--chasing somebody." So, after I got everything in the back, your back dislocated. So he put me on the board. So my mother said, my mother came and then put--Filipino friend they can fix your back. If I stay on my back one week, two weeks, then I don't play music. See.

I told my mother, "Okay." I told Doctor, "How I feel?"

"You all right. So long you don't move you go home.

(GG laughs)

JK: And I stayed, I think, three days in the hospital. But, on my back flat.

He said, "You take this board home and you stay on your back." But he didn't know that I was coming home, then I let the Filipino fix me up, you know. Because you got to use all kind of things in order to get yourself--I couldn't lay up in bed for one month. Because I had to work. So, in the meantime, if I'm going to work the Filipino people fix me up, just put whatever they have to, strap me (like a belt around midsection)

And I tell, "I going play music."

"Yeah, you go. Go play music." But when I go, I tell 'em who I'm working for. I can't commit it. I can't dance. I'm all strapped up. But if I dance and they going see what I got on me. So, "Okay." I just play.

GG: What kind of things did they use for medicine or herbs?

JK: Herbs mostly. What they believe, these Filipinos, the ones with the beard. So, to me--and the make me drink something too. And bitter. Oohh. I didn't like it. But in order to get well, I take it. I take everything.

GG: How did your mother happen to know?

JK: Well, we had that plenty of those people down and still yet the Filipino Immigration was still in Kakaako--on Kiawe and Auahi. So, lot of them and my mother became friends with them. One particular man. So, used to come. I smell that medicine--oohh.

(GG laughs)

GG: Do you remember what his name was?

JK: Oh, I don't know. Like any other thing, Gael, you don't think about the name. All you want to do is get well.

GG: Right, that's true.

JK: And in the meantime, you doing your part too. You know. You no can get well because of somebody else. You got to help yourself. Got to...

GG: Okay, I think we're just about covered everything. How about spell your last name for me because I think I've been spelling it wrong.

JK: K-E-K-A-U-O-H-A. See actually this name was given to my grandfather--my great, great grandfather. See, our name was supposed to be Kai-O. K-A-I, dash, and O. And another Hawaiian name. But according to our genealogy, not that name. I show you.

GG: What does Kekauoha mean?

JK: The Old Testament and the New Testament. Wait, I bring the book (Genealogy book). I show you. This is seven generations back. And we just had reunion--family reunion--last year, July 1.

GG: And is that when everybody got the genealogy book?

JK: Well, this cost me \$7. But whoever like it now it cost them \$10 to reprint all this. But this was important, first print.

GG: But how marvelous to have it.

JK: Get some crazy name in there, so. But I look this way, Gael, if their mother was a Kekauoha, then I know who they are. Or if their mother is not Kekauoha or if their father, too, see. Because like us, as long as Kekauoha we know who our family is. But when you get daughters they married.

GG: Right.

JK: You can't. You can't find them unless they come up to you. And tell who they are. Like what my mother was so and so. She was a Kekauoha. She belongs to. Her father, grandfather--her father was so and so. Well, I know. I know who they are. See. Because I met them when I was here. My grandfather's brothers, see.

END OF INTERVIEW.

REMEMBERING KAKA'AKO: 1910-1950

Volume I

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